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Thos. Aspley
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G. Stapleton

A
DESCRIPTION
OF THE
ISLAND OF CAPE BRETON,
IN
North America ;
INCLUDING
A BRIEF AND ACCURATE ACCOUNT
OF ITS
CONSTITUTION, LAWS & GOVERNMENT:
ALSO
The Encouragement held out by Government to Emigrants.
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE FORMS NECESSARY TO BE COMPLIED WITH BY
APPLICANTS FOR CROWN GRANTS;
ALSO
The Expence of Improving the Wilderness Lands,
WITH
THE ADVANTAGES THEREOF;
AND
OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

BY A GENTLEMAN,
Who has resided many Years in the British Colonies.

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Dr Henry Arledge died in the winter of 1829
son of Wm & Sarah Arledge

Long Wing & Sarah M. (p. 10)
Dr Henry Ashfield died in the winter of 1829
in Greenwiche Hospital - He was entered at
Hospital as Dr. Alexander Lewis & Name he
went by in his Majesty's Navy and that by
winning his prisoners of War from Blindness
he got blind at one eye himself
Miss Winton formerly Miss Ashfield the daughter
of Miss Ashfield & brother died at her house China Wall
Chelsea at her death 1820.

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the Information I
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the Public, con-
the indulgence of

E AUTHOR.

Amos & Co. 1823
at the corner
of the
year 1823 - Amos & Co.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THERE being no accurate account of the Island of Cape Breton extant, I have been persuaded to undertake the following Work in consideration of its usefulness. Brevity, with consistency and truth, have been my chief object, and in a few sheets is comprised all the Information I conceive important concerning the Colony. I beg leave now dutifully to submit it to the Public, convinced that my motives insure me the indulgence of a liberal and enlightened People.

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHILST persons, whose circumstances render it advisable for them to leave their native Country, and to migrate to distant climes, it appears a great misfortune, that many are left without a knowledge of the Asylum their Country has provided for them within her own Colonies. In the want of this information, we perceive many persons cruelly deluded by artful and exaggerated statements, and induced to quit their Country, directing their course to the United States of America, where there are fewer real advantages and inducements than possessed by our own Colonies, whilst they are led to sacrifice the dearest considerations of a loyal people, their allegiance to the Country which gave them birth, and to forego the benefits of a Constitution, founded and sealed by the blood of their ancestors. At a moment when hundreds of our Countrymen are embarking and abandoning their friends, under these fatal impressions, I conceive it to be an imperative duty to afford such seasonable information as a residence for several years in those countries has enabled me to collect. Having visited

the Island of Cape Breton, and Prince Edward's Island, the Provinces of Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, and travelled over part of the United States: in each of these governments it has been my chief object to ascertain, at the respective public offices, the qualification of applicants, and the expence of obtaining grants of crown lands, their situation and quality, and to endeavour to be an eye witness of the labour necessary to improve the wilderness lands, and particularly to observe the circumstances of the settlers, at the different stages of their improvement: and no part that I have hinted at appears to afford equal encouragement to the settler, to that of the Island of Cape Breton, with regard to soil, climate, and convenience. It having been the policy of Ministers to restrict the passing of any grants of land, the Island has been left without encouragement, and passed hitherto unnoticed, although possessing many superior advantages even to Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward's Island, which have been hitherto frequently and justly introduced to the public notice. Until the last summer, the only titles issued at Cape Breton were crown leases, constituting the occupiers of lands to be tenants at will; settlers, without being pressed by the most urgent necessity, would refuse accepting of so fickle a tenure; and several individuals, after making improvements, preferred to quit the Island, and abandon their farms, than to remain there, where they would obtain no security for the enjoyment of their

off-spring. These circumstances having been duly communicated home by the Lieutenant-Governor, with the advice of Council,—in reply thereto, from the Secretary of State's office for the Colonies, the Lieutenant-Governor was directed to issue Grants or Letters Patent in future, for such quantities of land as applicant settlers shall appear competent to cultivate; since which short period, upwards of one hundred Grants have been delivered at the public offices on the Island, and millions of acres of valuable land remain yet to be districated for the encouragement of industrious settlers. It may justly be concluded from the tenor of what I have already said, that I intend chiefly to confine myself to such remarks as I conceive essentially necessary to be known to the emigrant, who intends to settle on, and improve the wildernesslands of America: however it may not be amiss to add, for the information of such persons as are about to seek out a place of retirement, with encouraging prospects to their families, and also to those persons who go abroad to carry on a limited mercantile business, that the mines of Cape Breton, its fisheries, and its timber, may afford hereafter no inconsiderable field for speculation. Trusting to the exigency of the time, and to the candour of a liberal and enlightened Public, to excuse any oversight, I venture to detail a few particulars of this interesting Colony.

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Situation and Constitution
OF THE
ISLAND OF CAPE BRETON.

THE Island of Cape Breton, situate between 45 and 47 degrees of north latitude, and 61 degrees of west longitude, is separated from the province of Nova Scotia by the narrow strait, called the Gut of Canso: the easterumost part of the Island is called Cape North, lying opposite Cape Race, in the Island of Newfoundland, and forms the mouth or entrance of the Gulph of St. Lawrence. The Island of Cape Breton is upwards of 90 miles in length, and near 50 in breadth; its shores abounding with fine harbours, many of which are fit for the reception of ships of the largest tonnage. The interior of the Island is intersected with many navigable rivers and large lakes, that are supposed to cover, at least, one-third of the Island, rendering the country very advantageous for traders, owing to the facility with which they are enabled to ship and transport the produce of their farms to market, and return home with necessaries and supplies. The population of the Island is about

*Now increased
to near 20000
in
Sept 1822.*

8000 souls, the greater part of whom are descendants of the original French settlers, who became British subjects at the conquest of the Island, in the year 1758: the residue have principally emigrated from Scotland and the United States of America; those from the latter country are called American loyalists, who, being British subjects, left the United States at the period those provinces became disaffected.

The Island of Cape Breton is governed by the laws of England:—it has a lieutenant-governor and council, who are empowered, by his Majesty's instructions, to make such local ordinances as are necessary and suitable to the circumstances of the Island; but this arrangement is only to continue until such time as the Colony shall be enabled to find members to form a House of Representatives, to have a voice in the legislature similar to our House of Commons.

The power at present thus of necessity committed to the Lieutenant-Governor and Council is wisely limited, and the Royal Instructions direct that no ordinance whatever, affecting the life, liberty, or property of the subject shall be passed without a clause, suspending the operation of such ordinance until his Majesty's pleasure be made known.

It has been determined by the courts of law on the

Island, that an ordinance made to tax the subject, or affect his life or liberty, would, without the acquiescence of the subject, be unconstitutional and illegal, and therefore no taxes are levied on the Island at present.

The revenue of the Island arises from the rent of the coal mines, which, strictly speaking, belongs to his Majesty's privy purse, and a sum allowed by Parliament, called the annual contingent vote.

The Lieutenant-Governor and Council are also appointed for the conducting every matter relating to the government of the Island, wherein his Majesty's interest is concerned.

The following officers have been instituted for the government of the Island, with the names of the present offices annexed thereto :—

His Excellency Major-Gen. GEORGE ROBERT AINSLIE,
Lieutenant-Governor and Commander in Chief in and over his Majesty's Island of Cape Breton, and the Territories thereunto belonging, Chancellor and Vice-Admiral of the same.

HIS MAJESTY'S COUNCIL,

The Hon. A. C. Dodd,	The Hon. J. Weeks,
..... Richard Stone, F. M. Thurn,
..... F. Crawley, A. W. Desbaines, <i>Desbaines.</i>
Clerk of Council—Js. Crowdy, Esq.	

COURT OF CHANCERY.

Chancellor—G. R. Ainslie, Esq.

Master in Chancery—J. Weeks, Esq.

Register—James Crowdy, Esq.

COURT OF ERROR.

His Majesty's Council.

COURT OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

His Majesty's Council.

COURT OF KING'S BENCH.

Chief Justice—Hon. A. C. Dodd.

Assistant Justice—

Attorney-General—Hon. A. W. Desbaines.

Solicitor-General—

Prothonotary and Clerk of the Crown—C. E. Leonard, Esq.

Provost Marshal—

COURT OF ESCHEAT AND FORFEITURE.

Judge—Hon. A. C. Dodd.

Advocate-General—Hon. A. W. Desbaines.

Treasurer—F. M. Thurn, Esq.

Surveyor-General of Lands—F. Crawley, Esq.

Surrogate-General and Judge of Probate—C. R. Ward, Esq.

Surveyor-General of Woods—C. E. Leonard, Esq.

Secretary and Register—James Crowdy, Esq.

Port Master—Philip Ely, Esq.

HIS MAJESTY'S CUSTOMS.

Collector—Philip Dumaresque, Esq.

Comptroller—Ranna Court, Esq.

Inspector and Searcher—C. E. Leonard, Esq.

Naval Officer—Joseph Noad, Esq.

King's Agent for the Island—George Isted, Esq. St. James's Place.

The climate of the Island is very healthy, although the degrees of heat and cold are extreme, as will appear by referring to experiments of Farenheit's thermometer, which has been known to raise in the summer as high as 88 degrees, and in the Winter to fall to 38 degrees below the cipher; yet in Summer the days are refreshed by breezes, occasioned by the indraft of the harbours; and in winter the intense weather is generally serene and calm, and seldom severe enough to interfere with the avocations of the out-door labourer: the summer season is sufficiently long for the ripening of spring wheat, barley, oats, rye, and buck wheat, which the soil is well adapted to produce, and the lands lying contiguous to the shores and salt water, are not subject to early frosts, which frequently destroy the crops in the interior of Nova Scotia. Potatoes and turnips are the only roots that appear to occupy the attention of the farmer, and produce good returns: these roots are cultivated with great advantage on the new burnt lands, and require no other manure than the wood ashes. The grasses cultivated are fox tail or Timothy and brown top, with red and white clover, and produce from two to three tons of hay per acre: besides these grasses, there are species of salt marsh grass, called sage or mizot, and wild meadow grass, which is procured in many parts of the Island, and also saved by new settlers for winter provender.—The spring commences in April, but the ground is

seldom fit for tillage till the beginning of May, which, is considered the busiest period of the year for the farmer: the seed is no sooner in the ground than vegetation rapidly approaches; and June may be considered a summer month: towards the latter end of July the hay harvest commences: in the beginning of September the grain is fit to reap; and in October the potatoes are dug, and every part of the crop must be secured before the first of November, when the weather becomes unsettled, as the winter approaches. The autumn on the Island is much finer than in England. October is the pleasantest month in the year, the weather becoming moderately cool; and though November and December are subject to frost and partial falls of snow, the winter cannot be said to set in before Christmas. About the first of January navigation closes, and the harbours of the Island, except Louisbourg, Manadieu, and St. Peter's Bay, are frozen up, so as to form a complete bridge of ice, whereby the settlers are enabled to cross over with large ox and horse teams, and convey their fodder, fuel, &c. from the opposite banks of the harbour. During this season the settlers are occupied in feeding their cattle, providing their fuel, building vessels or boats, preparing timber for exportation, or catching peltry for sale.* In March

* The peltry trade consists of the skins of moose, carabon, wild cats, musk rats, minks, martins, weazles, racoons, bears, otters, and foxes of a red, silver grey, and black colour.

the ice begins to thaw, and flow out of the harbours, and navigation opens. It is at this time the French fishermen venture on the most hazardous voyage among the Icebergs, in pursuit of seals, for making blubber: having for this purpose followed the floating ice clear off the coast, they return, to render their oil, and prepare for the cod fishery, which occupies them and their families till winter.

Curiosity has not yet penetrated into the bowels of the vast mountains of Cape Breton, further than the discovery of its valuable coal mines, which will be hereafter noticed: many different specimens of ore have been collected and brought to Sydney, but have never been truly assayed, and we only suppose valuable by their appearance and specific gravity: many different specimens of fine spar and petrifications have also been discovered, and open an extensive field for the speculations of the curious in this respect.

The Island, as I have stated, contains extensive tracts of fine land, which, in a wild state, are covered with forests of trees, a large quantity of which is pine, fit for the English market, but very little has yet been shipped, under a supposition that it was required for the use of the Crown, and no licences consequently allowed for the purpose: licences are now grantable, and several vessels have been loaded

with the timber, the quality of which is thought to be of a closer texture, and superior to the timber of Nova Scotia. The fishery affords another branch of speculation, Cod, Haddock, Pollock, Salmon, Mackarel, Gaspereaux, Shad, and Herrings, are caught for exportation on every part of the coast; considerable quantities of train oil is taken from the Dog Fish, Cod, and Seals, in the spring of the year, and exported to England: these are the chief and predominant features of the Island.

The Forests of Cape Breton contain many species of wild animals, *viz.* * Bears, Wild Cats, Minks, Martins,

* The bears of the Island are never seen during the winter season, nor are their tracts discovered in the snow, which, in some degree, confirms the opinion entertained by the inhabitants, who state these animals to dig holes or dens in the ground, which they enter about the beginning of November, and remain there concealed in a torpid state for months together, without other nourishment than sucking their paws. This part of the natural history of that animal strange and incredible as it may appear, was confirmed to me by an old Indian, who stated, that a few seasons preceding, some time in the month of March, he happened to be hunting after moose, accompanied by his son; when they came to a place where the snow appeared to be considerably reduced, and having examined about the spot, they discovered an orifice, in which they suspected some animal lay concealed; after removing some of the snow with their tomahawks, they perceived the eyes of the animal glistening from its dark recess, at which his son discharged his musket; the animal dropped, and it was a consi-

Musquarta, Otter, Racoon, Beaver, and Foxes of a red mixed and black colour, and afford the best furs in the country; also two kinds of Deer are found in the wilderness. The Moose is the largest species of Deer, but being easily fatigued and taken after heavy falls of snow, the inhabitants have mostly destroyed them, for the sake of the tallow and hides: the Carraboo resembles the red Deer, and are to be met with in abundance at every part of the Island, though their quick scent and fleetness render them difficult of approach: the flesh of this animal is esteemed excellent and delicious venison: the Rabbits are plentiful, and do not burrow in the ground: in the Winter this animal turns white, and resembles the Alpine Hare: there are likewise Porcupines, and many other of the smaller species of animals, which are found in most woody countries.

The only species of birds which are peculiar to the colonies are the Partridges, of which there are two species, the birch and spruce, taking their names from

derable time before they could cut away the ice sufficiently to get to it, when they found it to be a large bear: from the appearance of the den, which was afterwards examined, they were convinced it was made before the frost, which renders the earth so very hard as to be impossible to dig into it, and from the size of the orifice, they were also certain the animal could not have left the den since the earliest fall of snow.

the trees, on the buds of which they feed, and are esteemed excellent for the table: the Robin, which resembles our Thrush in size and plumage, the Weep PoorWill, or Indian Night Bird, and the Humming Bird, is frequently found in these parts, and is famous for its small size, and the beauty of its plumage: there are also woodcock, snipe, curlew, and plover, with a great variety of sea fowl: the birds of prey are the eagle, vulture, and hawk.

The following are the principal harbours and settlements of the Island, *viz.* Sydney, Manadieu, Louisbourg, Gaberous, St. Peter's, Arichat, Gut of Canso, Port Hood, or Justicoque, Margaree, Cape North, St. Ann's, and Bradeck Lake, of which I shall attempt to add a brief account; and afterwards take a survey of the interior, natural history, and native Indians.

SYDNEY.

The present seat of government is called Sydney, and was founded in the year 1786, when the fortress, citadel, and town of Louisbourg were abandoned: it is a small town, situate on a fine tongue of land, about nine miles above the entrance of Spanish river, and is the residence of the public officers of the government: it is also the head quarters for

the troops, and has a fort, barracks, stores, and magazines: the south-west branch of the Spanish river is navigable for small craft, for six miles above the town, and the margin of the river is chiefly improved, and exhibits the face of a most pleasing and promising country, whilst the river affords abundance of different species of fish, for the supply of the town and suburbs. At the entrance of the Spanish river, about eight miles below the town, are situated the *coal mines, being the finest veins of coal discovered in America, and are at present worked to great profit by lessees, who pay an annual rent to government of about £2500. These coal mines not only encourage navigation, but also afford encouragement to the settlers, by the constant consumption of produce necessary to support so large an establishment, and being a source of employment, enable the industrious settler, at his leisure, to obtain the means of procuring many necessaries which he requires. The exportations from Sydney are chiefly confined to coal and dried fish.

As a statement of prices must be considered a necessary exposure, in order to assist us to make up a complete idea of the nature of a country, and ena-

* The Island abounds with coal mines, which lie in a horizontal direction, and being not more than eight or twelve feet below the surface, may be worked without the expence of digging deep or draining off the waters.

ble us to judge and compare it with others, I subjoin the following price current, at Sydac, for the year 1818:—

<i>Produce of the Island.</i>		<i>West India and Foreign</i>		<i>British</i>
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>Produce.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>Manufactures.</i>
Wheat, per } bushel, .. }	10 0	Rum, per gal.	5 0	Goods of every description may be purchased at a small advance on the British price.
Rye, do.	5 0	Brandy, do.	12 6	
Barley, do. ..	4 6	Port wine, do.	12 0	
Oats, do. ..	2 6	Madeira, do.	14 0	
Potatoes, do.	2 0	Sicily, do. ..	6 6	
Turnips, do.	1 3	Moist sugar, }	47 0	
Beef, per lb.	0 3½	per cwt. .. }		
Mutton, do.	0 4	Coffee, do. ..	45 0	
Pork, do. ..	0 4			

MANADIEU.

The settlement is situate to the of Sydney, distant about 64 miles, and contains about thirty families, mostly fishermen, who carry on the Cod and Mackarel fishery; also large quantities of Dog Fish are caught for oil. The harbour, though small, would contain upwards of one hundred sail of vessels, and is capable of admitting ships of any burthen to enter with safety: the entrance of this harbour being considerably exposed to an indraft from the sea, is kept continually agitated, particularly when the wind is on shore, and thereby prevented freezing, which is of

great advantage to coasters in the fall of the year, who are sure of finding there an entrance and safe retreat, though often frozen out of other harbours. The lands in this neighbourhood are of good quality, but little attention is paid to their improvement, further than is necessary to cultivate the small supply the settlers require for the consumption of their families: they, however, keep large stocks of cattle, which are supported through winter with marsh hay, obtained at Scattered Island, and brought in vessels to this place.

LOUISBOURG.

Louisbourg was at one time considered to be the strongest fortress in America; and when captured from the French, in the year 1750, was garrisoned by 15,000 men, and called the Key of the St. Lawrence and Canada. Louisbourg had no sooner fallen into our hands, than it was found unnecessary to support so large a garrison, as was absolutely requisite to preserve to us those formidable works. The town not being well situated for the encouragement of settlers, it was thought advisable to demolish the works. The town, which depended much on the garrison, was soon abandoned, and the seat of government removed to Sydney. At present there are but few vestiges of the town and fortifications remaining; a bomb proof, some old cellars, and walls and mounds

of earth, in different parts, convey only an imperfect idea of the perfection to which it had arrived. About 30 families now reside in the harbour, all comfortably settled, but depend much on the fishery for their support. It is a peculiar custom with the inhabitants of this neighbourhood to have their Summer and Winter abodes: about the first of May they move to their summer habitations, near the shore, where they have wharfs for their vessels, and for the curing, and making their fish, at the same time conveniently situated to their improvements: in November they remove to their winter houses, about two or three miles back into the country, where they have plenty of wood for fuel at their doors. Their cattle are well sheltered from winds and storms, and the tender shoots of the trees supply them with abundance of furze.

GABEROU'S BAY.

The shore from Louisbourg to Gaberou, and thence to St. Peter's Bay, presents large tracts of fine land for cultivation, and several inlets for the reception of fishing craft.

ST. PETER'S BAY.

St. Peter's Bay is very large, and affords good and safe anchorage for the largest ships: it is however not prudent for strangers to venture in without a pilot, or

without being possessed of charts, on which they can rely, as several sunken hedges lie many miles distance from the entrance of the harbour. It is much to be lamented, and I have been surprized to perceive that the advantages of this Bay are so little known to our mariners: it frequently happens, early in the season, when vessels arrive off the coast, bound to the lower ports of St. Lawrence and Quebec, that they are met by large bodies of Icebergs, which are forced through the Gut of Canso, or driven by the easterly winds into the entrance of the Gut, so as to choke the navigation: in this case the harbour of Arichat is filled up, but St. Peter's Bay, which is defended by the Island of Madam, would then afford the safest and most desirable shelter: for the want of this information vessels often get into great danger, and receive severe damage. St. Peter's Bay never freezes.

SHORE TO THE GUT OF CANSO.

From St. Peter's to the Gut of Canso is about 15 miles; the navigation and scenery is beautiful; but we meet with very little land that is worthy of the farmer's attention until we arrive at the river Inhabitant: the shores, however, of the Island of Madam are well occupied by Arcadian fishermen, who have formed themselves into villages.

ARICHAT.

Arichat, in the Island of Madam, is at present considered the most extensive settlement belonging to Cape Breton, and was occupied by the French, the ancestors of the present occupiers, before the capture of the Island in 1758. The fisheries are carried on here to a large extent by houses from Jersey, which export chiefly dried Cod and Haddock; also pickled Mackarel, Gaspereaux, and Herrings, to the Mediterranean, West Indies, and American markets. The settlers here are chiefly fishermen, each family having a vessel from 40 to 90 tons burden, which is fitted out and manned by themselves, and the profits accruing are mutually divided amongst them.

GUT OF CANSO.

The Gut of Canso is the name given to the much-admired navigable straight, which separates the Island of Cape Breton from the Province of Nova Scotia, and is about 18 miles in length, and about one mile in breadth: the whole distance affords safe anchorage for ships of the largest size. The shores are generally high and appear at first view to afford but little encouragement to the farmer. The old inhabitants state the lands to have been at one time well

wooded, but the trees have been cut down to supply vessels with fuel, while some persons, whose business or amusement carried them to encamp on the shores, have, inadvertently and carelessly communicated fire to the underwoods, which has destroyed the herbage, and blackened and damaged the appearance of the country: however, they assure me, that persons not so easily prejudiced, had settled there, and are now become opulent by their industry; that their lands, when cultivated, produce fine crops, and that a ready market and a cheap supply of every necessary they require amply reward their labour and expectations. It is from the high and mountainous shores of this part of the Island that large quantities of Gypsum or Plaister of Paris is procured and exported to the southern parts of the United States of America, and there esteemed the most valuable manure for that soil.

PORT HOOD, OR JUSTICOQUE.

Having left the Gut of Canso, we pass through a most fertile country, called Port Hood, or Jus-icoque: the settlers here are becoming very numerous, and are settling back four or five miles from the shore: these people depend entirely on the produce of their farms, and raise large stocks of cattle, which are exported to Newfoundland,

MARGEREE.

Margeree is situate on a river branching into the country, and taking its source from lakes in the interior, some of which have very lately been discovered: the borders of the river are a species of soil, called Intervale, a name given by the settlers to low lands that have been made by the sediment of the river, which is composed of the dead leaves and washings of the mountains, and deposited in the spring and fall of the year, when the swellings of the river occasion large tracts to be overflowed; the soil thus formed is a dark strong loam, of a friable nature, and is from five to six feet deep, without any appearance of sand or gravel stones. This soil is full of vegetable matter, and in its wild state produces a large growth of Elm and Oak Trees underneath, the herbage is extremely luxuriant. This species of land, when improved, is well adapted for meadow ground, and produces from three to four tons per acre; it is also well adapted for dairy or pasture ground. Margeree is allowed to be the finest river on the Island for the salmon fishery.

CAPE NORTH.

The lands, though mountainous, are capable of improvement; and the few settlers there have good farms, and seem comfortable and wealthy.

ST. ANN'S.

St. Ann's is one of the finest harbours on the coast, but the settlement, for want of inhabitants, is still in its infancy. The fishery is carried on here with great profit.

INGONISH.

The lands in this neighbourhood appear to have been originally improved by the French: they are still clear of trees, except in partial spots, and they are of a fir scrubby growth: the lands are generally covered with grass; and I was informed, by some of the settlers, that there are many wild meadows in the vicinity, from which some hundred tons of hay might be procured; but the lands appear very stoney, and the want of an harbour is much against the present settlement of these lands.

BRADECK.

Bradeck is a settlement noted for that species of soil, which I have already described at Margeree, by the settlers called Intervale. The farmers in this settlement confine their attention to the improvement of their lands, and are handsomely rewarded for their industry.

*A General Description of the Interior of the Island,
on a tour through the Brasdor Lake; with some
account of the Native Indians.*

Having, with rapid steps, passed around the exterior of the Island, and touched on the prominent features of the harbours and infant settlements, I come now to survey the interior of the Colony, by a tour round the Brasdor Lake. This Lake, at the present period, so interesting to the contemplative mind of the public, is a vast sheet of water, near forty miles in length, and in some places not less than fifteen in breadth, into which many rivers, large enough to admit small vessels, and lakes of a smaller description are continually discharging themselves: so noted are the peculiar advantages which from this inland sea are presented to the eye of the spectator, that it has always been the subject of enquiry of those * persons who have visited the Colony, and many have proceeded to the uninhabited shores of the Lake, for the purpose of witnessing the scenery and appearance of this infant and promising country.

* In the summer of 1818 it was visited by the Earl of Dalhousie and Sir David Milne, and several gentlemen passed some days viewing the lakes: Sir John Warren, Sir John Wentworth, and Admiral Griffith, have also expressed their opinion of the advantages possessed by this infant settlement.

In the summer of 1817, having some leisure on my hands, I determined to pass a short time in exploring the lakes, of which till then I was generally unacquainted, entertaining at the time but a faint idea of them, such as passing hastily through a country may create on the mind of the traveller. Having communicated to some of my friends at Sydney my intention of proceeding on the voyage, they advised that I should employ Indians, who were the best pilots, and that with their canoe I should proceed with comfort, and be easily landed at the different places where I chose to direct them.

I shall here take the opportunity of giving some account of the Aborigines or native Indians, their religion, and habits, and the encouragement held out by Government to this description of inhabitants. The native Indians, in appearance, resemble our gypsies; they consist of about 600 of the Mic-mac tribe, that profess the Roman Catholic religion: they are still governed by a Chief, but who has at present little power or controul over them. The Indians are of a low stature, and although not strong, are well made: the women are in general ill-featured, with a dull and vacant countenance. The Chapel is one of the finest buildings on the Island, and prayers are rigidly performed, and punctually attended by the Indians. A Priest, appointed by the Catholic Bishop of Twebee, visits them twice a year, when all the

Indians of the Island, with many families from the contiguous shore of Nova Scotia, assemble together: the Priest remains with them about a fortnight each time, during which they marry and christen their children, and confess. The Indians are continually wandering from one part of the Island to the other: they transport themselves along the shore in canoes: their baggage usually consists of a blanket, a musket, an axe, or tomahawk, and a large iron pot for cooking; also the peltry and feathers they have collected. Their canoe is constructed of the bark of a birch tree, and is very light, so that a man can carry it alone for several miles through the woods, when occasion requires: when they arrive at a place, where they intend tarrying, they erect a wigwam, by placing several long poles upright, in the shape of a tent, which they cover over with bark, leaving a space open at the top for the smoke to pass. In the centre of this camp they make their fire, and there can be but little doubt but this confinement, in intolerable heat and smoke, as well as exposure to the sun, gives the dark tinge of colour to the Indian tribes. After they have settled themselves in this manner, they continue fishing or hunting until the season expires, or until they have destroyed most of the wild animals of the neighbouring forests, when necessity obliges them to seek other parts of the country better supplied for their purpose.

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Hardships frequently endured, and frequent exposure to danger, has naturally and strongly impressed them with a duty of assisting each other in distress; and although the Indians may appear at first, in the eye of the European settler, to be an uncivilized and barbarous people, I think it but justice to them to observe, after a residence of many years in their neighbourhood, that I have always found them strictly honest, and that they have been ever ready to endure with each other, or with any of the settlers, hunger, fatigue, and danger, in preference to being guilty of an act of inhospitality. Government holds out a strong inducement for the Indians to become settlers, and several fine tracts of land have been reserved for the purpose, and some of them have evinced a disposition to improve them. Last November I visited a family who had cleared about 10 acres of land, and had several heads of cattle; but it is the nature of Indians in general to prefer change and variety to pursuing a particular course for any period of time. I trust, however, these industrious men will meet with encouragement and assistance to overcome the difficulties at first to be contended with, and that they will be an example to others. As the wilderness of the Island becomes improved, the wild animals of the forest will become scarce, and in time become extinct; the Indians, therefore, must of necessity resort to other means of existence; and, I am persuaded, that with some trifling encouragement, by way of bounty,

they would soon be induced entirely to forsake their present habits, and take to cultivating the soil: a society for the purpose might easily be formed: and I can venture to say, that the Priest of the district, Mosseur Gemtel, would, from motives of humanity, interest himself in forwarding a cause so loudly called on by the miseries and sufferings of his fellow-creatures.

Having accordingly hired my Indians, and made my arrangements for the purpose, I left Sydney on the evening of the 18th of August, and put up for the night at the house of Mr. Niel Campbell, situate at the Forks of Sydney river, seven miles distant from the town. In the course of the evening Campbell informed me, that he had lately arrived from Scotland, and had taken a lease of the farm on which he resided from a gentleman at Sydney, with the prospect of raising a stock of cattle for his new farm, which lay contiguous, and he was improving it in the meantime. The following morning, at my request, Campbell consented to accompany me over his farm: the premises consisted of about two hundred acres of improved land, about thirty acres of which, I suppose, to have been sown with grain, the remainder being meadow and pasture land; the dwelling house was in tolerable repair, with good barns and stabling; to which was attached a quantity of cattle, consisting of, I think, a pair of oxen, nine cows, a horse, and several heads of young cattle: the premises, with the stock I

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have mentioned, was let at a rent of £60. per ann. Having walked over the grounds I was much delighted with the appearance of the crops in general: the wheat in particular appeared to be very fine. Campbell informed me, that he expected the farm to produce at least 150 bushels of wheat, 100 bushels of barley, and 300 bushels of oats, besides 700lbs of potatoes.

Fearful of disappointing my Indians, after breakfast, I proceeded five miles to the lakes, where I found them waiting my arrival at the house of a Mr. Currie.

In travelling through this new country, it must be observed, that the roads, leading from one settlement to the other, are mere pathways or avenues cut through the forest, and the settlers reside at the distance of one and two miles asunder; so that I found a country only beginning partially to assume the appearance of the cultivation of which it was susceptible.

The appearance of the settlement, at which I had now arrived, presented a novel and interesting scene, a fine sheet of water, towards the margin of which, on either side, the lands lay gently inclined, covered with a forest of large Elm, Maple, Black Birch, and Spruce Trees. The farm lot where I was, consisted of two hundred acres of land, fifteen of which were cut down and cleared away in the form of a square;

about nine acres of this was sown and planted, the remainder being used as meadow ground: in the centre of the clearing stood the dwelling-house, constructed of square logs dovetailed into each other, and covered over at the top with shingles; in the inside a cleanliness and neatness of arrangement seemed to bespeak peculiar comfort and content; and I had an opportunity of realizing what I had anticipated before, that its industrious inmates provided and enjoyed a frugal supply of every necessary of life. Having set out with a determination to gain a knowledge of the country, and of the difficulties at first to be contended with in improving on wilderness lands, and the day being bad for the purpose of prosecuting my journey, I felt anxious to improve it, by obtaining all the information concerning this industrious and comfortable settler, and was much pleased to find, that he had no objection to gratify me in this particular. He stated, that he was born in Scotland, and had years before been induced, by the suggestions of his friends, to proceed to Prince Edward Island, where he had made a temporary settlement at a village, called Cherry Valley: it was there he received the first intelligence of the Brasdor; and with several of his friends afterwards hired a fishing boat, in order to satisfy themselves of the truth of the reports they had heard: the result was, they found every expectation realized; and before they returned, obtained orders of survey for two hundred acres of land each; and the

autumn following he removed thither with his family, consisting of a wife and three children, the eldest of whom was a daughter only fourteen years of age. It was now near three years since their arrival, at which time the lot was entirely covered with wood: the first winter they were occupied in erecting a camp, and clearing about three acres of land, which he sowed and planted the next spring: during the summer he was also occupied in clearing land, and occasionally finding employment in the neighbourhood, it enabled him to purchase supplies for his family until harvest: the first crop produced him enough to support his family during winter; and the last year he had a considerable quantity to dispose of, by which he was enabled to purchase three cows; and the present year he had bought a mare and a horse, besides several pigs: his farm, which cost him about £12. was now valued at £200. Being thus provided for himself, he now proposed to discharge his parental duty, and to apply for a grant of land for his family, that they might be comfortably situated near his own farm

The next morning proving fine, having procured a supply of provisions, and the Indians having provided themselves with the necessary fire-works to encamp, we proceeded in the canoe, and I was happy to find, that the Indians I had employed were men well acquainted with every part of the shore, and qualified to give me the information I required. On set-

ting off, I determined to proceed by easy stages to St. Peter's, keeping along the south side of the lake: about three miles below Currie's, I observed the branch we were on emptied itself into the grand lake: eight families were settled in this distance: they had only begun their clearings; the lands still retained a similar appearance of fertility.

Being informed that an Indian owned and possessed a farm close in the neighbourhood, I had much curiosity to see the premises, and desired to be landed, at which my Indians were highly delighted, being anxious to meet some of their relations: the improvements contained about fifteen acres of fine land, a small part of which was planted with potatoes: the exterior of the cottage in which they resided appeared rather neat to the eye; but on entering I was much disappointed at finding it to be but a shell, without any floor or chimney: in the centre they had made their fire, and the heat and smoke were intolerable; in short, it was furnished and used as a wigwam. From the appearance of these people, considering the quality of the soil, and the time they had occupied it, I pitied their ignorance, and the entire want of that industry and stability, which can alone afford a prospect of success in any pursuit in life: they knew nothing of the improvement of lands, nor possessed perseverance enough to overcome the apparent difficulties at first to be contended with: they were entire strangers to comfort and cleanliness.

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Our next stage was eleven miles further, at the house of one Roderick M'Neal, where I determined to pass the night, in order to have sufficient time to survey the surrounding country. We had now arrived at the widest part of the lake, and lost sight of the opposite shore from our canoe: we landed at the foot of a high cape, which projected itself far into the lake; and having, by a zigzag path through the woods, gained the summit of the hill, we found M'Neal's house lying about three hundred yards from us: the lands generally appear hilly, but fertile. M'Neal's farm contains two hundred acres of land, about twenty of which are cleared, one side of the clearing lies sloping towards a small inlet of fresh water, on which is annually made about six tons of hay: the crops of grain looked generally fine, but the potatoes seemed to require moisture or rain. After tea, M'Neal himself not being able to speak English, communicated to me, through one of his neighbours, the following part of his history:—“ That he came from the north of Scotland, and had settled on his farm about five years ago, since which time he had obtained a grant of it: that at the time he first settled he was very poor, and was a widower, and had no family to assist him in making improvements, and being at that time a man of fifty-five it came hard upon him; but he had now overcome all his difficulties, and the farm produced all he required, and was worth about £150.; that he owned also a handsome stock of cattle, and

was indebted to nobody; and that he had since been comfortably settled; married one of his neighbours' daughters, and had two children."

Having passed the night at M'Neal's, the next morning we pursued our journey, following along the shore: and at the end of five miles not having met with any settler, I determined to encamp, and by penetrating a distance into the country, ascertain the quality of this vast tract of unoccupied wilderness: we landed on a fine hard sand beach, and having carried the canoe into the woods, we proceeded: the lands from the shore rise with a sudden declivity, and become hilly and mountainous, but fertile. We had not gone above a mile before we arrived at a valley, covered with a forest of vast trees, and beneath producing a most luxuriant herbage: the land here was level, and of a strong black pliable loam: we continued along this strip of land, (for we afterwards discovered it to be not more than a mile in width): after having crossed it in several places for several miles, in expectation that it would lead us to some lake or wild meadow; but night approaching, we thought prudent to return, in order to prepare our camp. Having arrived within sight of the shore, we began to prepare our habitation for the night: the spot chosen for the purpose was on the declivity of a hill, conveniently situated to a fine stream of water, and a large hollow pine tree being split into planks supplied us with covering

for a shed, which we erected, slanting against the side of the hill: beneath the shed a quantity of spruce boughs were laid, on which we were to sleep. The camp being finished, the next object was to kindle a fire, which was soon accomplished, having plenty of *punk, which the Indians substitute for tinder.

There being no scarcity of fuel, an immense fire was made close in front of the camp, and as darkness approached, the blaze emitted became awful and grand: the night being calm, the Indians requested permission to fish for eels, which the neighbourhood was noted to produce: I accompanied them from motives of curiosity; the canoe was launched, we entered it, the Indians standing one at each end, with spears in their hands: I held the torch in the centre of the canoe, which burnt, producing a light like a link or torch: the astonishing effect of the light on the water was so great, that at the depth of twelve or fourteen feet, which was the length of the spear, we could distinctly discern every object at the bottom: the small Rock Cod, Perch, and Flounders, of which there were abundance, appeared stupified rather than frightened by the effect of the light: when the Indians observed any particular fish, which they wished to take, they brought the canoe gently within reach,

* A species of rotten wood,

and would throw the spear with great agility and skilful attitude. Having taken what fish we required, we returned to the camp, and cooked it; and, I think, I never enjoyed a meal of superior fish of the kind, nor better cooked under the circumstances, than by the Indians. After supper the Indians rolled themselves in their blankets, and laying with their heads to the fire, were soon sound asleep: being unaccustomed myself to such scenes, and the novelty of encampment, I got little rest, and found the night tediously long. Early next morning we set off and arrived at the Red Island settlement, five miles distance from the camp, and put up at the house of a Mr. Campbel: the Red Island settlement contains about fourteen families, who have formed themselves into a scattering village: the land is rather hilly, and, I think, stony; but the crops looked remarkably well, and the inhabitants, who were comfortably settled, assured me that they had no fault to find with it. I learned that the settlement was commenced about the year 1809, since which time the inhabitants, who had commenced with little or nothing, had become respectably settled, possessing large stocks of cattle, and fine farms. Our landlord stated, that he kept a house of entertainment, which might become of great advantage to him, from the number of travellers that were daily increasing; that boats would be shortly established as packets and for regular traders between St. Peter's and the town of Sydney; and would be of essential bene-

fit to the settlements on the lakes: at present they were under the necessity of keeping their own vessels, and of carrying their produce to market, and bringing home their supplies from Sydney or St. Peter's, observing, that at either of those places they could dispose of their produce, and purchase whatever supplies they stood in need of.

A quantity of netting hanging near the chimney next attracted my attention, on which my landlord continued:—that in the Spring and fall of the year they took whatever quantity of Mackarel and Herrings they required to salt for Winter use; that during the Winter season the lake was generally frozen over, strong enough to bear the heaviest teams, at which period, within a few hundred yards of their own doors, by cutting holes through the ice, they could take abundance of fine cod and haddock. The lake also contained other species of fish; Salmon, Trout, Shad, Gaspereaux, Bass, &c. were to be found in abundance; and in the spring the creeks and rivulets were filled with Smelts: those fish have been known to be shovelled out to manure the soil with.

We had now arrived within eleven miles of St. Peter's: next morning we went to view Mr. McNab's farm, about three miles distant, situate on a small river, or inlet. This grant contained one thousand acres, about one half of which appeared to be tillable

land. The worthy settler, I understand, was at one time in affluent circumstances, but through misfortune had been necessitated to abandon his friends, with whom he was accustomed to associate, and seek a livelihood abroad: he was the first settler on that part of the lake, having retired there with his family, consisting of a wife, a daughter, and three sons, totally unaccustomed to the woods of America, and without having any neighbour nearer than St. Peter's, to afford him assistance: it was here he cut down the first tree in his life and had to contend with superior difficulties; but to his credit be it said, he now soars above the frowns of fortune. We now proceeded to the Indian Island, six miles from St. Peter's, the lake grew sensibly narrower, and several Islands made their appearance, between which we had to pass: the land began to assume a more sterile appearance, being covered with black spruce, a sure indication of wet land. This Island contains about one hundred and fifty acres, and is reserved by Government for the use of the Indians, who have erected there a handsome Chapel, and a house for the Priest, who attends there twice a year, when the Indians have their meetings: only part of the Island is improved, about eight acres are planted in potatoes and Indian corn promises a good crop: about two miles beyond the Island, Mr. Scot has a good farm: after which we see little worth noticing, the lands being very inferior, until we arrive within sight of St. Peter's. This settlement lies

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on a narrow isthmus, that separates the waters of the lake from St. Peter's bay, and is the property of Mr. Kavanagh, a considerable merchant residing there: this is the most valuable estate on the Island, and is particularly well adapted for his pursuits, commanding the trade of the lakes on the one side, and an extensive and lucrative fishery on the other: about four hundred acres of the property is improved, and in a good state of cultivation, the proprietor sparing no expence about the farm: twenty men are usually employed in working it; and I understand the farm not only covers the expenses incurred, but makes a handsome and profitable return: the Mackarel fishery belonging to the estate is said to be the best on the Island, and two hundred Vanils are frequently taken at one haul of the scene. Having passed a few of the pleasantest days I recollect at the house of this gentleman, whose hospitality I must ever reflect on with gratitude, we prepared to leave St. Peter's, and complete our tour by returning along the north shore of the lakes to Sydney. Having communicated such my intention to the Indians, who, during my stay, occupied a wig-wam, at the edge of a neighbouring wood, we set off on our return. About nine miles from St. Peter's we perceived that the lake branched to the north-west, and ran towards the Gut of Canso: we followed the course a few miles, and found much good land, but very little improved and cultivated; and in some places there appeared many fine

timber trees fit to manufacture for transportation: continuing our return along the shore, we came to a number of settlers, all of whom appeared to be doing well. This side of the lake is more generally resorted to than the south shore; but we found nothing material to induce us to deviate from our former observations respecting the general quality of the soil, till we took our departure from the lake entering the Spanish river.

It is necessary to my present object to afford all the information that I conceive the emigrant may require, even after his arrival in the colony, and especially as to obtaining the grant of his land; and am therefore induced to subjoin the following account of the regulations directed to be conformed to in his application to obtain grants of crown land. I will also add a brief statement of the advantages and practicability of improving those wilderness lands; and first,

OF OBTAINING GRANTS OF LAND.

At a late sitting of the Council Board, it was resolved, That all petitions for grants of land should state in future the following particulars:—the person applying, his occupation, that he has taken the oath of allegiance, of what country he is, where he has resided

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in for the preceding six months, whether he is married or single, or has any, and what, family; and in what manner he intends to improve the said lands, by himself, by his family, or servants; and that he has not directly or indirectly agreed for the sale or transfer of the said lands. This petition must be sworn to before any justice of the peace, who is also authorized to administer the oath of Allegiance.—

After the petition is made out, it must be carried to the Surveyor-General, who certifies that the lands prayed for are not contained in any previous grant or reservation: it is then delivered to the Clerk of the Council, to be presented at the first sitting; the Council meets for these purposes the first Wednesday in every month. If the petition be granted, an order of survey is made out, which costs altogether about £1. 10., and will be considered a safe Title for a year; if however it is not convenient to have the lands surveyed within that period, the order can be renewed by the Governor, on representing the circumstances, and on paying costs, 2s. 6d., whenever the survey is returned. The Surveyor-General of the Woods grants a certificate, that it does not interfere with any of the Crown reservations: the Attorney-General then furnishes the form of the grant, prepared by the Secretary, which the Attorney-General examines, and to which he affixes his seal: the Secretary then affixes the great seal and carries it to the Governor for his signature,

and the grant is complete: it is then audited and registered in the proper offices. The expence to be incurred is about £12. in all.

OF IMPROVING the WILDERNESS LANDS.

Whenever the settler has discovered the limits or boundary of his lands, he prepares a temporary log-house, in which to reside until he has sufficiently cleared away the trees, to secure him from fire in a better habitation, to be built afterwards, at his leisure. This done, he proceeds to improve his wilderness lands, which may be cleared off at any time of the year; but about the end of July and August is undoubtedly the best season to cut down the trees; the sap is then up, and there is no danger of the young suckers shooting from the roots: the sun is then powerful and the trees are no sooner down than the leaves wither; and in the course of a fortnight the trees may be easily burned and consumed off the land.

From the following authentic estimate, an idea may be formed of the practicability and advantage of improving the wilderness lands:—

For cutting down, clearing off, fencing, and sowing with wheat and rye, five acres of wilderness land, at the current price of the country, being £4. per acre,

£20 0 0

Expence of saving the crop and thrashing,

£ 3 0 0

£23 0 0

Crop produced per acre, 12 bushels.

5 acres planted.

Produce, bls. 60 at 7s. 6d. per

bushel, .. £22 10 0

Straw, .. £0 0 0

} £22 10 0

By this estimate it will appear that the first crop nearly repays the whole of the expence: the next year the land ought to be planted with potatoes, which restores it; and the year following it will be fit for laying down to meadow, which is usually sown with oats: potatoes and turnips produce well on the new burnt lands, and require no other manure. It is thus the settler progressively advances, until his industry, in a short time, has provided him with the means of keeping a stock of cattle, and of procuring every comfort and luxury the country affords.

Having thus exhibited the peculiar advantages possessed by the infant Island of Cape Breton, and discharged my duty to Society, I shall conclude the present subject, requesting to remind the indulgent reader, that notwithstanding what has been said, it is not every individual, who arrives as a settler on the Island, that is sure to be happily and independently settled, for there are a few examples to the contrary; but these may be traced to the abuses of a kind country, and appear to be the punishment of indolence and vice; and only tend to prove, that virtuous industry alone will insure happiness with riches.

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